

# Introduction to the Economic Census

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## PURPOSES AND USES OF THE ECONOMIC CENSUS

The economic census is the major source of facts about the structure and functioning of the nation's economy. It provides essential information for government, business, industry, and the general public. Title 13 of the United States Code (Sections 131, 191, and 224) directs the Census Bureau to take the economic census every 5 years, covering years ending in "2" and "7".

The economic census furnishes an important part of the framework for such composite measures as the gross domestic product estimates, input/output measures, production and price indexes, and other statistical series that measure short-term changes in economic conditions. Specific uses of economic census data include the following:

- Policymaking agencies of the federal government use the data to monitor economic activity and to assess the effectiveness of policies.
- State and local governments use the data to assess business activities and tax bases within their jurisdictions and to develop programs to attract business.
- Trade associations study trends in their own and competing industries, which allows them to keep their members informed of market changes.
- Individual businesses use the data to locate potential markets and to analyze their own production and sales performance relative to industry or area averages.

## INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATIONS

Data from the 2002 Economic Census are published primarily according to the 2002 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). NAICS was first adopted in the United States, Canada, and Mexico in 1997. The 2002 Economic Census covers the following NAICS sectors:

21	Mining
22	Utilities
23	Construction
31-33	Manufacturing
42	Wholesale Trade
44-45	Retail Trade
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing
51	Information
52	Finance and Insurance
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
61	Educational Services
62	Health Care and Social Assistance
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
72	Accommodation and Food Services
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)

(Not listed above are the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting sector (NAICS 11), partially covered by the census of agriculture conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Public Administration sector (NAICS 92), largely covered by the census of governments conducted by the Census Bureau.)

The 20 NAICS sectors are subdivided into 100 subsectors (three-digit codes), 317 industry groups (four-digit codes), and, as implemented in the United States, 1,179 industries (six-digit codes).

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## RELATIONSHIP TO HISTORICAL INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATIONS

Prior to the 1997 Economic Census, data were published according to the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system. While many of the individual NAICS industries correspond directly to industries as defined under the SIC system, most of the higher level groupings do not. Particular care should be taken in comparing data for retail trade, wholesale trade, and manufacturing, which are sector titles used in both NAICS and SIC, but cover somewhat different groups of industries. The 1997 Economic Census *Bridge Between NAICS and SIC* demonstrates the relationships between NAICS and SIC industries. Where changes are significant, it may not be possible to construct time series that include data for points both before and after 1997.

Most industry classifications remained unchanged between 1997 and 2002, but NAICS 2002 includes substantial revisions within the construction and wholesale trade sectors, and a number of revisions for the retail trade and information sectors. These changes are noted in industry definitions and will be demonstrated in the *Bridge Between NAICS 2002 and NAICS 1997*.

For 2002, data for enterprise support establishments (those functioning primarily to support the activities of their company's operating establishments, such as a warehouse or a research and development laboratory) are included in the industry that reflects their activities (such as warehousing). For 1997, such establishments were termed auxiliaries and were excluded from industry totals.

## BASIS OF REPORTING

The economic census is conducted on an establishment basis. A company operating at more than one location is required to file a separate report for each store, factory, shop, or other location. Each establishment is assigned a separate industry classification based on its primary activity and not that of its parent company. (For selected industries, only payroll, employment, and classification are collected for individual establishments, while other data are collected on a consolidated basis.)

## GEOGRAPHIC AREA CODING

Accurate and complete information on the physical location of each establishment is required to tabulate the census data for states, metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas, counties, and corporate municipalities (places) including cities, towns, townships, villages, and boroughs. Respondents were required to report their physical location (street address, municipality, county, and state) if it differed from their mailing address. For establishments not surveyed by mail (and those single-establishment companies that did not provide acceptable information on physical location), location information from administrative sources is used as a basis for coding.

## AVAILABILITY OF ADDITIONAL DATA

All results of the 2002 Economic Census are available on the Census Bureau Internet site ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)) and on compact discs and digital versatile discs (CD-ROMs and DVD-ROMs) for sale by the Census Bureau. The American FactFinder system at the Internet site allows selective retrieval and downloading of the data. For more information, including a description of reports being issued, see the Internet site, write to the U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233-6100, or call Customer Services at 301-763-4100.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The economic census has been taken as an integrated program at 5-year intervals since 1967 and before that for 1954, 1958, and 1963. Prior to that time, individual components of the economic census were taken separately at varying intervals.

The economic census traces its beginnings to the 1810 Decennial Census, when questions on manufacturing were included with those for population. Coverage of economic activities was expanded for the 1840 Decennial Census and subsequent censuses to include mining and some commercial activities. The 1905 Manufactures Census was the first time a census was taken apart

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from the regular decennial population census. Censuses covering retail and wholesale trade and construction industries were added in 1930, as were some service trades in 1933. Censuses of construction, manufacturing, and the other business censuses were suspended during World War II.

The 1954 Economic Census was the first census to be fully integrated, providing comparable census data across economic sectors and using consistent time periods, concepts, definitions, classifications, and reporting units. It was the first census to be taken by mail, using lists of firms provided by the administrative records of other federal agencies. Since 1963, administrative records also have been used to provide basic statistics for very small firms, reducing or eliminating the need to send them census report forms.

The range of industries covered in the economic census expanded between 1967 and 2002. The census of construction industries began on a regular basis in 1967, and the scope of service industries, introduced in 1933, was broadened in 1967, 1977, and 1987. While a few transportation industries were covered as early as 1963, it was not until 1992 that the census broadened to include all of transportation, communications, and utilities. Also new for 1992 was coverage of financial, insurance, and real estate industries. With these additions, the economic census and the separate census of governments and census of agriculture collectively covered roughly 98 percent of all economic activity. New for 2002 is coverage of four industries classified in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector under the SIC system: landscape architectural services, landscaping services, veterinary services, and pet care services.

Printed statistical reports from the 1992 and earlier censuses provide historical figures for the study of long-term time series and are available in some large libraries. Reports for 1997 were published primarily on the Internet and copies of 1992 reports are also available there. CD-ROMs issued from the 1987, 1992, and 1997 Economic Censuses contain databases that include all or nearly all data published in print, plus additional statistics, such as ZIP Code statistics, published only on CD-ROM.

### **SOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION**

More information about the scope, coverage, classification system, data items, and publications for the 2002 Economic Census and related surveys is published in the *Guide to the 2002 Economic Census* at [www.census.gov/econ/census02/guide](http://www.census.gov/econ/census02/guide). More information on the methodology, procedures, and history of the census will be published in the *History of the 2002 Economic Census* at [www.census.gov/econ/www/history.html](http://www.census.gov/econ/www/history.html).

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